

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: May 5, 2016

Meeting No.: 225

Project: Port Covington MP

Phase: Discussion

Location: Founders Park & East End Districts

PRESENTATION:

This presentation of the Port Covington Master Plan was a Discussion between Sagamore Development, their design team presenters, and the UDARP panel members, and focused on the area of the Port Covington Master Plan defined by Founders Park (at the core of the plan), and the area immediately to the east known as the East End Districts.

The presentation began with a summary by Caroline Paff of Sagamore Development. The area under review comprises the final two Districts for review in the Masterplan. Ms. Paff acknowledged that this day's presentation would first focus on comments and modifications to the Plan based on Panel comments from the April discussion. Then, the presentation would focus on the Districts identified for review above. Those comments from the last Panel meeting focused on:

- Consider the composition and width of Cromwell Street
- A recommendation for moving the bicycle path to the south side of Cromwell
- More clearly define the urban plaza and refine parking, vehicular, bike and pedestrian plans for that area.
- Clarify the open space internal to the block north of Sagamore Spirit and the open space plaza at the terminus of East Cromwell.

Mr. David Manfredi of Elkus Manfredi Architects presented responses to the concerns listed above. In the process of studying Cromwell Street in section, the right-of-way has been reduced from 190' in width to 156' in width. Reductions were taken by removing one lane of parking on the south side, as well as reductions in the bio-swale areas along the south side, and the width of the outer sidewalks on both the north and south sides of the street.

Mr. Manfredi then reviewed modifications to the public open space known as the Urban Plaza. Several scale comparisons were offered to better understand the opportunities and constraints this significant plaza might afford. Considering the concerns noted above, the parameters of the plaza plan were modified by revisiting Violet Street, so that bicycle paths move north and south on opposite sides of the street (rather than along the north/south greenway), reconfiguring the bike path through the plaza along its south edge, separated with planting (as along the remainder of Cromwell), and establishing the underground parking entrance/egress along the west side of

the plaza (likely through pavilion structures that form an edge to the space along the west side of the plaza). New perspectives of the proposed modifications were shared.

Addison Palmer of STV Incorporated then reviewed the existing conditions and constraints of the overall site, and in particular, the areas defined as the Founders Park and East District areas. Of note, Mr. Palmer reminded the Panel of Sagamore's interests in connecting to South Baltimore and the challenges associated with the areas in, around, and under I-95, as well as proposals for light rail transit along the northern boundary of the proposed site. These Districts also contain the functioning site of the Baltimore Sun. Information was shared by Ms. Paff about interim and ongoing connections for trucks and cars that will continue to access the newspaper's production site. Vehicles in need of access will be pulled into defined corridors that will allow the waterfront at Cromwell to be developed in the near term.

Mr. Manfredi returned to present the new District plans. The focus of the presentation centered upon use studies at the ground floor, division of parcels district-wide, and massing studies to better understand the volumes intended for the area. Significant parking structures are intended as part of a strategy to buffer I-95 to the north of the District. Studies of possible building entries, service opportunities, loading and street parking were also presented.

Areas of focus also included the Greenway (Orange Street) in section, Founders Park and the multi-modal connections off of this central green. In addition, other significant streets in the District were presented, including Violet (modified to include the aforementioned changes based upon the Panel's comments from the last meeting), and East McComas Street and the inclusion of light rail opportunities. Massing studies of the area surrounding Founders Park suggested buildings ranging in size from 75' immediately surround the park, rising to 125' throughout. Towers, ranging in scale from 300' and 400' (or greater), move from east to west along the north side of the District (including the East District). Massing studies for the East District suggested a similar scale of development to that of the Founders Park area. Aerial perspectives district-wide were presented as a means of compiling all of the information into a comprehensive approach and vision.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

This meeting was a "discussion," and although not a formal presentation, there are comments that should be considered by the design team. The Panel was genuinely pleased with the progress of the Master Plan and complimentary of the efforts to date.

Founders Park and East Districts

The new District presentation comments included a need for sun/shadow studies for the massing surrounding Founders Park to understand the implications of the 75' and 125' heights to the south. It is important to understand the implications of shadows on this space through all seasons. Studies might demonstrate that the south side massings need to step up and back more graciously, allowing greater amounts of sun into the central green. And within the north side, how does the massing resolve itself between the small residences that ring the park, the 75' buildings, and the 300'-600' towers?

None of the presentation views looked outward from the proposed development. The area of greatest concern is the nature and terminus of the Greenway into I-95. A view is needed to I-95 from Founders Park and a demonstrated understanding of how the Greenway, Tan Street, and McComas might intersect to form a better resolution. The Panel asked if there was the possibility of structured parking under I-95. Ms. Paff acknowledged that that area will always remain State property, but understands the City's interest in energizing that area. Sagamore is hopeful that the area under I-95 will resonate thematically with "Light as Energy" such that the present "no-man's land" is illuminated and glowing, suggesting to all those passing on the highway above that something wonderful is happening at the Port Covington site.

Planning Director, Tom Stosur, asked if there was intent to bring light rail from McComas down to the Under Armor campus site. Ms. Paff acknowledged that there was no intent to do so, although an internal circulator is under discussion presently.

Mr. Stosur requested a comprehensive housing typology study. In particular, consider a greater variety of residential typologies than has been depicted thus far, all of which are large-scale. Where is the neighborhood feel? Smaller scale is missing from the overall plan, which is largely comprised of "huge, mega-scale constructs." Don't foreclose an opportunity for the single-family, row home typology.

Urban Park and Cromwell Street

The adjustments to Cromwell and the Greenway/Urban Plaza areas were generally positive, although additional study in specific areas should be considered in advance of any formalized plan.

The current plan does not suggest that cyclists will engage with the Under Armor campus from Cromwell, including the general public who might want to engage Ferry Bar Park. Understanding how cyclists and pedestrians connect from the Port Covington plan into the campus plan and to Ferry Bar Park is important. Some Panel members are concerned that the underground parking entry structures proposed along the west side of the Urban Plaza will interfere with connections from the Greenway (Orange Street) and the Plaza to those heading south to Ferry Bar Park.

Greater clarity is needed at the intersection of Cromwell and West Peninsula Drive where the UA campus and the Port Covington plans come together. Perhaps extend the median on West Peninsula Drive north, so that drivers have a greater legibility of how to move through the new development as they leave the UA campus. Push the proposed pavilion structures on the west side of the Urban Plaza to the east, so that their western facades align with the facades of the UA garage structures south of Cromwell. This will carry the urban edge through the intersection.

Please demonstrate how the intersection of Violet Street and Cromwell will work safely. The confluence of cyclists, pedestrians, and motorized vehicles still appears confusing in plan. What are the priorities here?

How will “speed” cyclists and “recreational” cyclists be separated in the context of public spaces (like the Greenway) where sidewalks for “shared use” are identified? How will the modal split between those recreating and those commuting be acknowledged?

Although the developer has acknowledged there will be opportunities for civic structures, to date no locations have been identified. Ms. Paff acknowledged that there is the intention for a school to be cited within the requested zoning. The Panel asks for a thoughtful response to the consideration that civic structures will be needed within the proposed fabric of development, including fire stations, post offices, etc. There is a need to show how these elements fit within the urban fabric, even if it is hypothetical at this stage, as they play a role in the social and community aspect of the construct. Consider how other Baltimore communities distribute these same elements as a potential guide.

PANEL ACTION: Discussion Only.

Attending:

Nate Evans – Toole Design Group

Barbara Mosier, Addison Palmer, Susan Williams, Ryan Barth – STV

David Manfredi, Jacob Kain, Mark Sardegna – Elkus Manfredi

Brain Miller – Under Armour

Caroline Paff, Michael Pokorny, Liz Williams – Sagamore Development Co

D.J. Thomas, April Keomorokot – Younts Design

Alex Jackson – Maroon PR

Claude Engle – Claude Engle, Lighting Designer

Chris Streb – BioHabitats

Betsy Boykin – Core Studio Design

Graham Young – DOT

Natalie Sherman – Baltimore Sun

Bowden, Burns, Haresign, Illeva, Rubin* - UDARP Panel

Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Tamara Woods, Jaleesa Tate, Laurie

Feinberg, Wolde Ararsa, Matthew DeSantis, Brent Flickinger–Planning Dept